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Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council Equality and Diversity Policy (Reviewed May 2023)

Introduction

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council values people from all backgrounds and believes that our members and staff have a right to be free from prejudice and discrimination. We believe that while people are all different, they have an equal right to benefit from opportunities. We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination and will challenge all forms of discrimination.

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council recognises that the provision of equal opportunities in the community is good practice and aims to create a culture that respects and values each other's differences and that promotes dignity, equality and diversity. We aim to remove barriers, bias or discrimination that prevent individuals or groups from realising their full potential and contributing fully to the community to develop a culture that positively values diversity.

We have clear procedures that enable our members and staff to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated. Breaches of our equality and diversity policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

All staff and members are required to take a one-hour online equality and diversity training session provided by EALC.

This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually.

Our equality commitments

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council is committed to:

- promoting equality of opportunity for all persons.
- promoting a harmonious environment in which all persons are treated with respect.
- preventing occurrences of unlawful direct or indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- fulfilling our legal obligations under equality legislation and associated codes of practice.
- complying with our own equal opportunities policy.
- taking lawful and affirmative action where appropriate.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that no members, staff, volunteers and users receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of:

- Age
- Disability
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins)
- Gender including gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Ex-offenders

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council's commitment as an employer

- Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council is an **equal opportunities employer**. We are committed to equality of opportunity and to providing a service and following practices which are free from unfair and unlawful discrimination. It seeks also to ensure that no person is victimised or subjected to any form of bullying or harassment.
- We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances. All employees are covered by this policy and it applies to all areas of employment including recruitment, selection, training, deployment, career development, and promotion. These areas are monitored and policies and practices are amended if necessary to ensure that no unfair or unlawful discrimination, intentional, unintentional, direct or indirect, overt or latent exists.
- The Personnel Committee has particular responsibility for implementing and monitoring this Equality and Diversity Policy and, as part of this process, all personnel policies and procedures are administered with the objective of promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unfair or unlawful discrimination.
- All employees, workers or self-employed contractors whether part time, full time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the parish council.
- Equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and compliance with the law is to the benefit of all individuals in the parish council as it seeks to develop the skills and abilities of its people. While specific responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with the senior management team, individuals at all levels have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. The personal commitment of every employee to this policy and application of its principles are essential to eliminate discrimination and provide equality throughout the parish council.
- We will ensure that all employees, male or female, have the right to the same contractual pay and benefits for carrying out the same work, work rated as equivalent work or work of equal value.

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council will:

- Create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of our staff are recognised and valued.
- Ensure that every employee, worker or self-employed contractor is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- Make training, development and progression opportunities available to all staff.
- Ensure that equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense.
- Review all our employment practices and procedures regularly to ensure fairness.

Equal opportunity policy statements

Age

We will:

- ensure that people of all ages are treated with respect and dignity.
- ensure that people of working age are given equal access to our employment, training, development and promotion opportunities.
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about younger and older people.

Disability

We will:

- provide any reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people have access to our services and employment opportunities.
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about disabled people.
- seek to continue to improve access to information by ensuring availability of: loop systems, Braille facilities, alternative formatting and sign language interpretation.

Race

We will:

- challenge racism wherever it occurs.
- respond swiftly and sensitively to racist incidents.
- actively promote race equality in the parish council.

Gender and gender reassignment

We will:

- challenge discriminatory assumptions about women and men.
- take positive action to redress the negative effects of discrimination against women and men.
- offer equal access for women and men to representation, services, employment, training and pay.
- provide support to prevent discrimination against transsexual people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment.

Sexual orientation

We will:

- ensure that we take account of the needs of LGBTQ+ people.
- promote positive images of LGBTQ+ people.

Religion or belief

We will:

- ensure that employees' religion or beliefs and related observances are respected and accommodated wherever possible.
- respect people's beliefs where the expression of those beliefs does not impinge on the legitimate rights of others.

Pregnancy or maternity

We will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of pregnancy or maternity.
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the pregnancy or maternity of our employees.
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' pregnancy or maternity.
- ensure that people are treated with respect whether they have or do not have dependents.

Marriage or civil partnership

We will:

- ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity and that a positive image is promoted regardless of marriage or civil partnership.
- challenge discriminatory assumptions about the marriage or civil partnership of our employees.
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged and that we take account of the needs of our employees' marriage or civil partnership.

Ex-offenders

We will:

- prevent discrimination against our employees regardless of their offending background (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults).

Resources

- We ensure that any resources are balanced and reflect the diverse nature of the community.
- We endeavour to ensure that any resources are as accessible as possible to all abilities/cultures/languages of the community.

Meetings

We endeavour to hold meetings at a time and place suitable and accessible to all staff and members.

Job applications and volunteering roles

- We have a commitment to equal opportunities as part of any job description.
- We advertise as widely as possible, in accordance with needs and resources.
- We focus on ability, not disability.
- We treat all applicants fairly.
- We regularly review our procedures and application forms for staff and volunteers.
- Volunteers are as respected and supported as members of staff.